

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: Design Review Board Members

FROM: Lawrence J. Goldzband, Executive Director (415/352-3653; lgoldzband@bcdc.ca.gov)
Ellen Miramontes, Bay Design Analyst (415/352-3643; ellenm@bcdc.ca.gov)

SUBJECT: Draft Minutes of January 6, 2014 BCDC Design Review Board Meeting

1. **Call to Order and Attendance.** The Design Review Board's Chair, John Kriken, called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 p.m. Other Design Review Board members in attendance included Karen Alschuler, Ephraim Hirsch, Stefan Pellegrini and Gary Strang. BCDC staff in attendance included Bob Batha and Brad McCrea.

2. **Approval of Draft Minutes for the October 7, 2013 Meeting.** The Board approved the minutes from this meeting with no changes. Karen Alschuler recused herself during approval of the minutes due to her professional involvement with Gateway Park, which was the subject of these minutes.

3. **Water Emergency Transit Authority (WETA) Central Bay Operations & Maintenance Facility, City and County of Alameda. (First Pre-Application Review).** The Board conducted its first pre-application review of the proposal to construct a maintenance and administrative facility to serve the Water Emergency Transit Authority (WETA) Central Bay ferry operations, including a 6,100-square-foot, four-story building, berthing facilities for 8-12 vessels, and a yard to support maintenance activities. The public access improvements proposed include replacing an existing Bay Trail segment with an approximately 145-foot-long new trail in an adjoining park, installing a new five-foot-wide pathway adjacent to the fence bordering the site, constructing a 17-foot-wide pathway along the northern edge of the project site along Hornet Avenue and installing new directional and interpretive signage throughout the area.

a. **Staff Presentation.** Bob Batha introduced the project, the issues identified in the staff report, and the project representatives.

b. **Project Presentation.** Michael Gougherty, a Senior Planner with WETA, gave a brief overview of WETA and introduced the project elements. Boris Dramov, with ROMA Design Group, then presented the proposed project and associated public access in detail.

c. **Board Questions.** The Board members asked the following questions:

(1) Mr. Strang asked whether the MARAD (the United States Maritime Administration) lease site must be fenced. Mr. Dramov said yes and Andrew Thomas, a planner with the City of Alameda, explained that the gates are open during the day to provide access to the ships but are closed at night.



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(2) Mr. Kriken asked whether all of the military ships would remain. Mr. Thomas stated that the MARAD vessels are “ready-reserve” and are moved all the time. The Hornet is the only historic ship, is operated as a museum, and stays in place.

(3) Mr. Kriken asked whether this is the best location for the Hornet. Randy Ramey, with the Hornet Foundation stated that this is not the best location from an access perspective.

(4) Mr. Hirsch asked where there is public separation from the project site and specifically wanted to know where the proposed fences would be located. Mr. Dramov indicated the proposed fence locations on the plans.

(5) Ms. Alschuler asked what the neighboring uses are, what the scale of those uses are and how the proposed project fits in with larger plans for the area. Mr. Dramov described various uses in adjacent subareas and explained that no residential uses would be located nearby. The proposed zoning would allow buildings as high as 100 feet.

(6) Mr. Strang asked what other streets relate to the site. Mr. Dramov indicated the proposed streets on the master plan.

(7) Mr. Strang asked whether there were any view issues related to the proposed project. Mr. Thomas responded that views are not an issue for the City.

(8) Mr. Hirsch asked how sea level rise would be addressed. Mr. Dramov stated that the project is located above the 100-year flood elevation given future sea level rise projections.

(9) Mr. Hirsch asked how the seal haulout on the existing, deteriorated docks proposed for removal were being addressed. WETA’s environmental consultant stated that they had determined that the impacts were not significant, that the seals were opportunistic and would haul out at other available sites, including a primary haul out area on the nearby breakwater.

d. **Public Comment.** The following public comments were made:

(1) Jerry Bellows (WETA Board Member and MARAD staff): He stated that this project was a great synergy of uses.

(2) Lee Huo (a planner with the Bay Trail): He thanked the team and expressed the Bay Trail Project’s hope to eventually have two Bay Trail alignments around MARAD – one close to the Bay through the MARAD site, the other along realigned Hornet Avenue.

(3) Kevin Barrett (a resident of Alameda): He asked who at the meeting is representing the City of Alameda. Andrew Thomas stated that he was.

(4) Richard Bangert: He explained that harbor seals have taken a liking to the docks and just because it is an accidental habitat that does not mean that we should “chalk it up to a take.” He stated that we should use it as an opportunity to create a similar dock or habitat. He further noted that it is a benefit to have marine mammals on the Bay and we should work with marine mammal experts to create another habitat in the area for the seals. With regards to the proposed building, he believes it would be a valuable public access idea to stipulate certain days of the month when there is supervised public access to the roof of the proposed WETA building so that the public could enjoy those views. Lastly, he noted that the ferries would block views and he believes that the view blockage calls for the enhanced public area to be extended a little further east.

(5) Karen Bey (a 40-year resident of Alameda and a ferry rider): She believes this project is exciting, both locally and regionally, as so many people have discovered the ferry. She further noted that the nature preserve and park space that would be provided in the larger area would be great.

e. Board Discussion

(1) Mr. Strang noted that a 3-foot-wide tree well is narrow at the sidewalk. He suggested achieving a larger tree well by combining the two planting areas. This would allow for a wider sidewalk and a wider tree well (would result in 11-foot-wide sidewalk and 6-foot-wide planter instead of a 4-foot-wide planter, a 10-foot-wide sidewalk and a 3-foot-wide tree well).

(2) Mr. Hirsch stated a desire to make the southeast triangle accessible to the public.

(3) Mr. Kriken stated that this little park would be a natural viewing area to all the ferry activity. He further explained that we often don't have such strong settings to draw people to the water and that this presents an opportunity to create a destination such as a coffee house, a place to paint water colors or a veranda overlooking the activity. He believes that the park should be designed as more of a destination.

(4) Mr. Pellegrini stated that the building would be an important terminus to the view from the Bay Trail as one moves west. Similarly, the experience of the building along the sidewalk is important and should be more transparent (with windows) to create more visual interest along the street. Just as there will be "jewel buildings" at seaplane lagoon, this building should be something special. The building should be pleasing to look at from the public access areas. The eastern end of the building could have some tower articulation or otherwise be used to orient around. The building should possess a "degree of natural orientation."

(5) Ms. Alschuler stated that if the building were to be lighted at night, it could be quite interesting to view at night.

(6) Mr. Kriken noted that the seal haulout appeared to be a separate project.

(7) Mr. Strang noted that COR-TEN steel may be the wrong material to use for stormwater retention.

(8) Mr. Kriken suggested that the shoreline path connect with the southeast triangle for a viewing opportunity. Mr. Dramov explained that the design sought to provide people with choices of paths and experiences.

(9) Ms. Alschuler suggested "bending" the fence at the triangle in order to provide enhanced Bay views.

(10) Mr. Kriken recommended widening the smaller walkway along the shoreline that would lead to an overlook.

(11) Mr. Strang noted that BCDC has a recommended plant list that encourages the use of natives. He expressed concern regarding maintenance of the proposed landscaping and recommended the use of durable, drought tolerant plants.

(12) Ms. Alschuler stated that staff should review the proposed fence design prior to permitting.

f. Project Proponent Response. The project representatives thanked the Board for their suggestions and input

g. **Board Summary and Conclusions.** The Board stated the following conclusions:

(1) The public open space should be more connected to the water at the southeast corner of the project. The fence should be relocated within the triangular area referred to during the Board's discussion, to result in enhanced Bay views in this area. The proposed fence design should be reviewed by BCDC staff prior to permitting.

(2) The public access area should be designed more as a destination than primarily an area to pass through.

(3) The building appearance along the eastern end and the façade fronting Hornet Avenue should be improved and made more transparent.

(4) The tree wells along the Hornet Avenue sidewalk should be wider. The applicant could consider adding the planter along the front of the building and the tree well together.

(5) The proposed planting palette should draw from BCDC's Shoreline Planting Guide and employ the use of natives and other durable plant materials appropriate for the setting.

(6) The Board does not need to review the project further.

4. **Adjournment.** Mr. Kriken adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:35p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

ELLEN MIRAMONTES
Bay Design Analyst